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FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL ASSEMBLY](#)
SUBJECT: OIL MINISTER RESIGNS AS GOVERNMENT TRIES TO DEFUSE
TENSION WITH PARLIAMENT

REF: A. KUWAIT 1573
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 1562
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 1153

Classified By: CDA Alan Misenheimer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al Sabah accepted the resignation of Oil Minister Bader Al-Humaidhi on November 5. The resignation should end the state of tension between the Government and Parliament in the short term, but the ultimate sources of contention between the two sides remain. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al Sabah accepted the resignation of Oil Minister Bader Al-Humaidhi on November 5. Electricity and Water Minister Mohammad Al-Elaim will be acting Oil Minister for the time being. The PM formed a new cabinet just 8 days ago (October 28), which dropped the much maligned Islamic Affairs minister and shifted Al-Humaidhi from the Finance Ministry to the Oil Ministry (refs A and B). These moves were designed to placate MPs who had submitted grilling requests for both ministers. MPs were not satisfied with the change, however, and threatened to grill the PM himself for allowing the former Finance Minister to stay on. Even the pro-Government Speaker of Parliament, Jassem Al-Khorafi, engaged in a rare public spat with the PM. Al-Khorafi complained that he had not been consulted in the formation of the new cabinet, to which the PM responded that he did not have to consult with the Speaker. The Amir, who generally remains above the daily fray of politics, called a meeting with the Speaker and the PM after which the two publicly declared that the tension had cleared.

Comment

[1](#)3. (C) The resignation of Al-Humaidhi should defuse the immediate crisis. However the country may still face more of the grillings-related tensions that have dominated Parliament for the past year. While the Popular Action Bloc, which led the opposition to Al-Humaidhi, declared in recent days that the Oil Minister's resignation would end the crisis from its perspective, other MPs have complained that dropping or rotating the controversial ministers is an unacceptable way for the Government to avoid having its alleged misdeeds aired publicly. Some MPs have gone as far as saying the Government's strategy was subverting Parliament's constitutional right to hold ministers to public account. These MPs may continue to hound the Government. For instance, Education Minister Nouriya Al-Sabih has been the subject of grilling rumors and MPs may set their sights on her next.

[1](#)4. (C) The conflicts over ministers are a symptom of the fundamentally tense relationship that has developed between

the popularly elected Parliament and the royal-family-appointed Government. Kuwait changed its electoral law last year to make elections less patronage-based and more issues-based and the current unwillingness of MPs to cooperate with the Government may reflect the fact that MPs are increasingly unlikely to win seats by doling out government services. A liberal MP informally published a draft law to legalize political parties in July (ref C) and tribal Islamist MP Abdullah Akkash reportedly formally submitted a parties law to Parliament November 4. Political parties would further erode the Government's ability to placate MPs. Thus the ouster of Al-Humaidhi may calm relations temporarily but the tense atmosphere between the Government and Parliament is likely to continue. There is speculation that continued tensions could ultimately lead to a dissolution of Parliament. Rumors persist that the Amir may not respect the constitution by calling new elections, though the Amir will not take such a decision lightly.

15. (C) These political tensions do not threaten the stability of the country and are unlikely to affect Kuwait's position on major foreign policy issues of concern to the United States.

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